TV Update

CIA/MEDIA

CBS Affiliates Concerned About Being No. 3

York—Robert Wussler, president CBS-TV, recently predicted to a group of financial analysts that "someday it is conceivable—in 1980 let's say—that the network that is third [in the ratings] is the most profitable." The recipe for such gravy, by CBS's reckoning, calls for cutting back program costs while commanding high revenues from network advertisers.

Now, several weeks into the new season, CBS is running third to NBC (by one-tenth of a rating point) and ABC (by 5.5 rating points). Word of CBS's new cost-conscious philosophy has filtered out to the provinces where a sampling of CBS affiliates exhibits some apprehension about the effect of continuing in third place. The main reason for their concern: some 40 percent of their advertising revenues comes from locally sold spots. The prices they can charge depend to a large extent on network ratings.

"Being third might be profitable for them [CBS] but it sure wouldn't be profitable for us," said Steven Mathis, general manager of WNAC-TV in Boston. "It may be welcome news to the CBS stockholders, but as a major CBS affiliate it doesn't thrill me at all." Added Law Epps, general manager of WTOL-TV in Toledo, Ohio, "If we are third we are likely to get third-rate prices [from advertisers]." And Lloyd Cooney, general manager of KIRO-TV in Seattle, cautioned that any network disregarding the importance of first place in the ratings "would not be satisfactory to the affiliates."

How does Italian actor Marcello Mastroianni define a Latin lover? Dick Cavett knows, because Mastroianni told him during a recent taping for Cavett's new interview program. The show makes its debut Oct. 10 on public television stations. The trouble is that Mastroianni used vulgar language in his definition. Executives of WNET in New York, the station producing the show, worried for a week about censoring the controversial segment.

Now, they have devised a solution. Before the interview is telecast in late October, the Public Broadcasting Service will advise local stations that "adult material" is on the way. Station executives will have to decide for themselves whether to bleep or not to bleep. *—Sally Bedell*

Hollywood—Commenting on a recent article by Carl Bernstein in Rolling Stone, CBS News president Richard Salant admitted that CBS did at one time share information with the Central Intelligence Agency.

"We used to have a year-end roundup," he said, "when all our correspondents would come back from around the world. They would go down and have a luncheon or dinner with the CIA where they traded impressions. I didn't like it, and I put a stop to it in the early '60s. There was also a period when we apparently allowed the CIA to look at outtakes. We put a stop to that a long time ago.

"We hadn't learned yet how important it is to keep a 20-foot pole between ourselves and *any* government agency." *—Dick Russell*

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